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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0565
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 0019
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 6020
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFIASS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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RUEATRS/US TREASURY WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 002473

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DEPT FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CT, G KATE FRIEDRICH, G/IWI
DIANNE GRAHAM
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND
CENTCOM FOR POLAD, CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76
TREASURY FOR LMCDONALD, WBALDRIDGE, APARAMESWARAN, ABAUKOL
STATE PLEASE PASS USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
SAN JOSE FOR JANA COOLEY
REL NATO/ISAF, AUS, NZ

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR PINS AF

SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT REACTS TO CONVOY CRASH

REF: KABUL 2436

Classified By: DCM RICHARD NORLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Both houses of the Afghan Parliament resumed debate on security in closed session on Tuesday, May 30. According to MPs, the US military convoy vehicle accident of May 29 was discussed, but debate quickly moved to larger security issues. No statements were made calling into question the presence of Coalition forces in Afghanistan, but some MPs were critical of the behavior of Coalition forces. MPs were more critical of the Afghan National Police (ANP) response to the riots and of the perceived lack of a GOA strategy to improve security in the country. The leadership of both houses decided to form a joint committee to discuss security issues and the lower house may be considering approving a resolution on the sources of insecurity in Afghanistan. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) In conversation with Poloffs, MP reaction to the US convoy crash that led to rioting on May 29 ranged from "accidents happen" to "it was a conspiracy organized by enemies of Afghanistan." All MPs in the lower house of Parliament (the Wolesi Jirga - WJ) were familiar with CFC-A's and Ambassador's statements of regret (and compensation as appropriate for the victims of US actions) about the accident. WJ Speaker Yunus Qanooni publicized these statements in the media and repeated them on the floor of the Wolesi Jirga; MPs seemed satisfied with them. Advocates of a conspiracy theory stated that Panjshiris were took advantage of the crash to generate disarray (supported by some photos showing protesters holding posters of Massoud), while others mentioned Pakistani, Russian, or Iranian intervention, but most MPs acknowledged that the protesters were made up of organized elements, opportunists, and some people genuinely upset about the crash. Several MPs stated that the ANP had fired into crowds of protesters; one MPs told Polcouns that he had heard a Humvee had opened fire on a crowd, killing

three people, but this view was in the minority.

13. (C) Parliament began the day with a prayer for those killed and a meeting with a delegation representing the survivors of those who were killed. Several MPs commented that they themselves had gone out to help the injured or to talk with protesters. Delegations from Parliament went to the scene of the accident (Shukria Barakzai (WJ-Kabul), who was unfamiliar with the massive size and weight of the truck involved, commented that there was so much destruction at the scene it was hard to believe it was an accident) and to hospitals to comfort the wounded. A joint Meshrano Jirga-Wolesi Jirga committee of MPs has also been formed to investigate the facts of the accident. Several MPs plan to travel to the districts affected in order to further calm tensions.

Discussion Focused on Overall Security Issues

14. (C) Most MPs remained more interested in discussing security issues in Afghanistan rather than the specifics of the accident. May 30 was the third consecutive day that Parliament has debated the security situation in Afghanistan. On May 28, according to Haji Ibrahim (Qanooni's brother and political advisor), Parliament focused on the following points:

- There is a gap between the government and the people of Afghanistan.
- The President has not identified priorities to improve security in the country.
- Tribal/ethnic discrimination has skewed what should be

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equal representation of the different groups that make up Afghanistan.

- Corruption has destroyed the trust of the general public in the government.

15. (C) Sessions on May 29 and 30 were closed to the public, but according to reports from MPs and staff, debate on May 30 was not focused on American forces, but Coalition forces in Afghanistan and the GOA as a whole. The criticism directed at the Coalition was generalized) focused on alleged aggressive driving tactics and the inability to prevent civilian casualties (as in last week's attack in Kandahar) - although one MP stated that he was disappointed that ISAF did not deliver on security in Kabul on the day of the riots. More criticism was directed at the GOA and President Karzai for what was labeled as the poorly-trained Afghan National Police (ANP) and for the more general perception that the GOA lacks a unified strategy to promote security in Afghanistan. Other MPs used the opportunity to advocate for their own causes) such as support for individual warlords in the North who they stated could provide security if they were able to deploy their forces. MPs and senior Parliamentary staff also lamented the fact that the riots might set back business development plans in Afghanistan, because several potential business visitors canceled or postponed their trips after seeing television coverage of the riots.

16. (C) The Wolesi Jirga is reportedly working on a resolution outlining its view of the causes of insecurity in Afghanistan. This resolution is likely to focus extensively on Pakistan as a source of insecurity, and may call on the US to put more pressure on Pakistan to stop sheltering terrorists.

Comment

17. (C) The crash itself is likely to fade from the imagination of MPs in the next few days, but the underlying issues MPs feel they have - the occasional clash of cultures between Coalition military activities and traditional Afghan

society, the perceived lack of security overall, and criticism of the Karzai government's security policy - will remain and emerge again whenever an incident sparks outrage. When cool heads prevail, MPs recognize the essential role Coalition forces play in ensuring Afghanistan's security, but in the heat of crisis, not all heads are inclined to remain cool. The unfortunate coincidence of the convoy crash and the civilian casualties in the Kandahar attack made the reaction to these events more pronounced than it would otherwise have been.

¶8. (C) Karzai can expect to face serious criticism of the GOA response to the riots and on security issues in general. Haji Ibrahim called the riots a wake up call about the state of Afghanistan's security forces, and we can expect Qanooni to follow suit with similar criticism. More worrisome for the President might be the position of Jamil Karzai (cousin to the President) who stated that this incident changed his thinking about the government, and commented extensively to Poloff on GOA's lack of a security strategy. Since Mission Kabul is encouraging the GOA to take the lead on response to the riots, this could, however, end up being an opportunity for Karzai to demonstrate the effectiveness of his military if the situation remains as calm as it was all day May 30.

END COMMENT.

NEUMANN